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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [KPKO](#) [UNSC](#) [ER](#) [SO](#)
SUBJECT: SOMALI FM MAKES URGENT PLEA FOR AID TO AMB. RICE

REF: A. NAIROBI 951
[B](#). NAIROBI 955
[C](#). NAIROBI 964
[D](#). USUN 303

Classified By: Amb. Susan Rice, for reasons 1.4 b/d.

[1](#). (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 10.

[2](#). (C) SUMMARY: In a May 13 meeting, Somali Foreign Minister Mohammed Omaar briefed Amb. Rice on the situation in Mogadishu following fighting between Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and Islamist opposition forces of al-Shabaab and the Hizbul Islami. He said the TFG was confident it would gain the upper hand against insurgents, whom he said included approximately 290 foreign fighters in Mogadishu alone and others elsewhere in the country. Omaar asked for urgent USG assistance - "ammunition, weapons and cash" - to help the TFG defeat its extremist opponents, whom he described as following "al-Qaida command and control." End summary.

[3](#). (C) Somali FM Omaar described the TFG as "fully engaged in battle" with insurgents in a May 13 meeting with Amb. Rice. He said that the government's forces were performing well, and that widespread reporting in Somalia on the prominent role of foreign fighters in al-Shabaab's offensive had prompted a backlash in public opinion against al-Shabaab. This had increased sympathy for President Sharif's government and had led clan militias to join forces with the TFG, which the TFG hoped could mobilize up to 5000 fighters to reinforce government forces.

Foreign fighters

[4](#). (C) Omaar said that "al-Qaida is in charge" of al-Shabaab's offensive in Mogadishu, citing TFG and clan sources as reporting approximately 290 foreign fighters present in Mogadishu. Of these, he said that ten held senior rank in al-Shabaab's command structure, and that a Caucasian American who he identified as "Abu Mansour al-Amriki" (AKA Omar Shafik Hammami) was the tactical commander of al-Shabaab's military forces in Mogadishu. The foreign forces included nationals of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Eritrea, Europe and North America, Omaar said, adding that an undetermined number of foreigners had been killed during weekend fighting.

[5](#). (C) Omaar said that more foreigners were working with al-Shabaab in Merka, Kismayo, and Baidoa. In Baidoa, he reported that another Caucasian American (NFI) linked to al-Qaida had come into conflict with Somali al-Shabaab leader Mukhtar Robow by attempting to install a governor without Robow's agreement. Omaar said that the Baidoa area was also reportedly the area where the greatest number of Somali-American al-Shabaab associates was concentrated. He

estimated their numbers total approximately 50-100. Another Somali al-Shabaab leader, Hassan al-Turki, had also been seen in Mogadishu within the last 36 hours, Omaar said.

Hizbul Islami/al-Shabaab split?

¶16. (C) Omaar reported that Somali warlord Indha Adde's surrender to the Hizbul Islam militia of Hassan Dahir Aweys had sparked a confrontation between Aweys and al-Shabaab. According to Omaar, al-Shabaab presented Aweys with three demands: that he turn over to them the weapons surrendered by Indha Adde, renounce all ties with Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki (a non-Muslim), and publicly declare his allegiance to Osama bin Laden. According to Omaar, this could be a positive development if it forced Aweys to make a choice. Omaar said that the TFG had previously reached out to Aweys, even offering him a cabinet post as Interior Minister, only to see Aweys try to overthrow them. The FM predicted that if Aweys were to break ties with al-Shabaab and seek renewed negotiations with the TFG, it would be from a position of weakness and Aweys would be "politically finished."

Eritrea and Qatar

¶17. (C) Omaar said that Eritrea had facilitated Aweys's return to Mogadishu and that Eritrea had sent three Antonov flights, on April 28, May 1 and May 5, to supply Aweys's forces with weapons and medicine in advance of their assault on Mogadishu. He speculated that Eritrea was sowing instability in Somalia in an attempt to "suck Ethiopia back in" to Somalia, but it would not work, he said: the TFG would never ask Ethiopia to return. Omaar said that the TFG believes

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Qatar is funding some of Eritrea's assistance to Aweys out of a well-meaning but "completely misinformed" approach to the situation in Somalia.

UNPKO

¶18. Following contradictory statements by the TFG in the wake of Omaar's last Council appearance, Amb. Rice asked him to clarify whether or not the TFG sees a UNPKO in Somalia as a desirable goal. Omaar responded that a UNPKO was a "valid option" that needed to stay on the table as Somali forces built their capacity, but implied that UN forces might not be necessary should AMISOM be fully deployed and should Somali forces succeed. Rice asked if he thought rehatting as a UN operation would make peacekeepers a bigger target. Omaar responded that the prospect of a UNPKO was at least 6 months away, and that in 6 months time the TFG expected to be in a much stronger position with respect to al-Shabaab, and that the TFG's goal was to push al-Shabaab back to Kismayo, where it would be unable to threaten peacekeepers.

Urgent request for aid

¶19. (C) Omaar said that while the TFG was confident in its forces, it urgently needed the U.S. and other international partners to provide "ammunition, weapons, and cash" - particularly ammunition - to help it turn the tide against al-Shabaab and take control of the situation in Mogadishu. This, he said, is a "formal request" for urgent U.S. assistance. To date, Burundi has been assisting the TFG with ammunition, and the TFG hopes that Djibouti and the UAE will be able to provide help as well, he said. Omaar said that he was also pressing donors who had pledged cash to the TFG at the Brussels donors conference, namely Iraq and Saudi Arabia, to transfer the funds to the TFG on an urgent basis. In response to a question from Amb. Rice on the optics of U.S. assistance, Omaar responded that U.S. donations of weapons, ammunition or funds would ideally be channeled through Uganda. He also mentioned that the TFG would welcome U.S. willingness to join France's efforts to train Somali forces in Djibouti (Note: France has recently announced plans to train 500 TFG troops in Djibouti. End note.).

Action request:

¶10. (C) USUN requests urgent Department consideration of the TFG's request in order to ensure that the TFG has sufficient supplies to respond to the recent al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islami offensive in Mogadishu, and to backfill any supplies released to AMISOM for transfer to the TFG.
Rice